Cycling holidays in **Rhodes** with **Sean Kelly** - Page 33

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AUGUST 2025

5 CYCLING DESTINATIONS TO VISIT 2025

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INTERVIEW WITH ELINOR BARKER

REVIEW Club Med Serre Chevalier

REVIEW POWERbreathe

NOVA SCOTIA

Written by Peter Johnson

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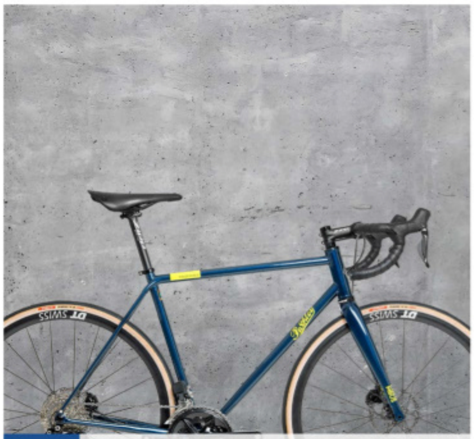

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WELCOME

Nick Branxton
Editor

editor@bike-mag.com

Dear Readers,

As the summer sun stretches across Europe, we bring you an issue packed with adventure, innovation, and inspiration, designed to fuel your passion for cycling wherever your wheels may take you.

This month, we journey through the Southern Alps, where Club Med Serre Chevalier has reinvented itself as a year-round haven for cyclists. With guided rides, luxury amenities, and breathtaking scenery, it's a destination that blends challenge with comfort. Whether you're climbing the legendary Galibier or relaxing in alpine spas, Serre Chevalier proves that mountain magic isn't just for winter.

We also follow Peter Johnson's evocative ride from Quebec to Halifax in Nova Scotia, a tale of friendship, resilience, and rain-soaked roads. From historic villages to liquorice-fuelled rituals, it's a story that reminds us why we ride, not just for the destination, but for the memories made along the way.

For those seeking new horizons, our feature on Eastern Poland offers a fresh perspective on bike touring. Quiet roads, warm hospitality, and the stunning Green Velo route make this region a hidden gem for cyclists. From Bialystok to Krakow, the journey is rich with culture, cuisine, and unexpected beauty.

We spotlight five top cycling destinations for 2025, from South Africa's Garden Route to the Andean lakes of Chile and Argentina. Whether you're craving coastal breezes or mountain climbs, these curated adventures promise unforgettable experiences.

Innovation takes centre stage with Pashley's Roadfinder SL, a British-built steel speed machine that marries tradition with cutting-edge design. Handmade in the UK and built for performance, it's a celebration of craftsmanship and speed. Meanwhile, Restrap's modular Switch System redefines bikepacking with gear that's as adaptable as your ride.

In tech news, GET and WES unveil a pioneering performance monitoring system for e-MTB racing, setting a new standard for fairness and data-driven competition. And for those looking to boost their own performance, our review of the POWERbreathe shows how five minutes a day can transform your breathing, and your ride.

We also sit down with Olympic champion Elinor Barker, who shares insights on training, nutrition, and staying grounded in the fast-paced world of pro cycling. Her advice is practical, heartfelt, and a reminder that cycling is as much about mindset as it is about muscle.

From the cobbled climbs of Montmartre to the sun-drenched roads of Rhodes with Sean Kelly, this issue celebrates the diversity of cycling, its landscapes, its people, and its stories. Whether you're chasing KOMs or coasting through quiet countryside, August 2025 is your invitation to ride boldly, explore deeply, and connect meaningfully.

So clip in, turn the page, and let the journey begin.

Ride safe,
Nick

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A New Standard for Off-Road Versatility

NORTHWAVE RAZER

In a world where off-road cycling is evolving beyond traditional boundaries, Northwave introduces the Razer—a shoe designed to meet the demands of modern riders who seamlessly transition between gravel, XC trails, bikepacking adventures, and touring escapades.

The Razer is engineered for versatility, comfort, and performance. At its core is the XC 10 sole, boasting a stiffness index of 10 out of 15, striking a balance between efficient power transfer and long-ride comfort. Durable TPU inserts enhance grip and longevity, making it a reliable companion across varied terrain.

The shoe's dual-layer TPU upper ensures breathability and a secure fit, while reinforced toe and heel sections offer protection from trail hazards. Inside, a silicone heel lining prevents slippage, and fabric eyelets distribute pressure evenly for a snug, comfortable feel. A mesh tongue adds to the shoe's ventilation, keeping feet cool on demanding rides.

Closure is handled by the X-Dial SLW3 system, allowing precise, on-the-fly micrometric adjustments with a simple twist or button press. Paired with a velcro strap, the Razer offers a customizable fit that adapts to the rider's needs in real time.

Available in three colorways, plus a women-specific version, the Razer comes in sizes 36 to 48 and retails at €169.99. Whether you're chasing KOMs or exploring new trails, the Northwave Razer is built to keep up with every twist and turn of your off-road journey.

GET and WES Forge Strategic Partnership to Revolutionize E-Bike Racing Performance Monitoring

In a groundbreaking move for competitive e-Mountain biking, GET, the electronics brand of Italian tech powerhouse Athena, has officially partnered with WES (World E-Bike Series) to launch a pioneering performance monitoring system for e-Bikes in racing conditions. After years of behind-the-scenes collaboration, the initiative enters its pilot phase during the 2025 WES racing season.

The partnership aims to enhance fairness, transparency, and performance analysis in e-Bike competition by deploying a cutting-edge control system developed by GET. This system combines a physical device with advanced software to monitor key performance indicators in real time, directly from race bikes during WES events.

WES, the first and only UCI-sanctioned E-Mountain Bike World Cup, has become a vital testing ground for manufacturers seeking to push the boundaries of e-Bike technology. The collaboration with Athena—renowned for its expertise in motorsport electronics—marks a significant step forward in integrating high-level data acquisition into the sport.

GET's system builds on its legacy in engine management and telemetry, applying sophisticated firmware and software to deliver precise power control and parameter analysis. The goal is to ensure race integrity while providing teams and manufacturers with actionable insights to refine their setups.

A full feasibility study is currently underway, with a complete test phase scheduled for October 2025, during the final WES events of the season. If successful, the system could become a standard feature in future competitions, setting a new benchmark for performance monitoring in e-MTB racing.

CYCLING EVENTS AUGUST 2025

Pedals in Motion: August 2025 Cycling Events Across Britain and Europe

As the summer sun continues to blaze across Europe, August 2025 promises to be a thrilling month for cycling enthusiasts. From the rugged hills of Wales to the historic streets of Bratislava, the calendar is packed with sportives, gran fondos, and elite races that cater to every level of rider. Whether you’re a seasoned competitor or a weekend warrior, this month offers a diverse array of events that celebrate the spirit and endurance of cycling.

British Highlights: From Coast to Countryside

Britain's cycling scene in August is vibrant, with events spanning the length and breadth of the country. Kicking off the month is the Brewdog Ride Out Sportive on August 2nd in Ellon, Scotland. This 97 km ride combines scenic views with a festive atmosphere, perfect for riders looking for a social yet challenging experience.

On the same day, the Galloway Recycle Sportive in Dumfries & Galloway offers a 126 km route through some of Scotland's most picturesque landscapes. It's a great opportunity for riders to test their endurance while supporting sustainability initiatives.

Mid-month, the BoC Toughest 100 on August 17th in Sheffield lives up to its name with a grueling 212 km route that challenges even the most hardened cyclists. That same day, the Brecon Beacons Devil in Powys, Wales, pushes riders through 215 km of mountainous terrain, making it one of the most demanding sportives of the season.

For those seeking a more relaxed ride, the Bike Chester on August 17th offers a 120 km route through the charming Cheshire countryside. Meanwhile, the Tour de Broads in Norwich provides a scenic 160 km ride through Norfolk's flatlands, ideal for riders looking to enjoy the landscape without extreme elevation.

The month concludes with a flurry of events on August 31st, including the Manchester 100 Bike Ride, RIDE Essex, and the Hertfordshire 100. These events not only offer varied terrain but also support charitable causes, making them a meaningful way to end the summer cycling season.

European Excitement: Tour de France Legacy and More

Across the Channel, Europe's cycling calendar is equally packed. The L'Etape Czech Republic by Tour de France on August 2nd offers a 100 km route through Prachatice, bringing the prestige of the Tour to amateur riders. Similarly, the L'Etape du Tour de France Femmes in Chambery, France, provides a 112 km course that celebrates women's cycling and encourages broader participation.

On August 24th, the L'Etape Slovakia in Bratislava continues the Tour de France legacy with a 112 km ride through the Slovakian capital's historic and scenic routes. These events are part of a growing trend to bring professional-level experiences to amateur cyclists across Europe.

One of the most unique events this month is the Skoda 24 Hours Cycling at Le Mans on August 23rd. This endurance race challenges teams and solo riders to complete as many laps as possible within 24 hours on the iconic motor racing circuit. It's a test of strategy, stamina, and teamwork that draws participants from across the continent.

Grassroots and Gravel: The Rise of Alternative Rides

Beyond the headline events, August also showcases the growing popularity of gravel and grassroots cycling. The Devon Grit on August 24th in Exmouth offers a 110 km gravel ride through the South West's rugged terrain, appealing to riders who prefer off-road adventures.

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In West London, the Randonax Rides on August 25th presents a 200 km audax-style event that emphasises self-sufficiency and navigation skills. These rides are gaining traction among cyclists who value exploration and endurance over competition.

Looking Ahead: Building Community Through Cycling

August's cycling events reflect a broader trend in the sport—one that values inclusivity, community, and personal challenge. From charity rides like SamsRideNorth 2025 in Aberdeenshire, which covers an astonishing 913 km in support of Samaritans, to youth-focused initiatives like the National Youth Omnium Series, cycling continues to grow as a sport that welcomes all. As riders across Britain and Europe gear up for these events, the roads will be filled with stories of perseverance, camaraderie, and joy. Whether you're chasing a personal best or simply enjoying the ride, August 2025 is set to be a landmark month for cycling.

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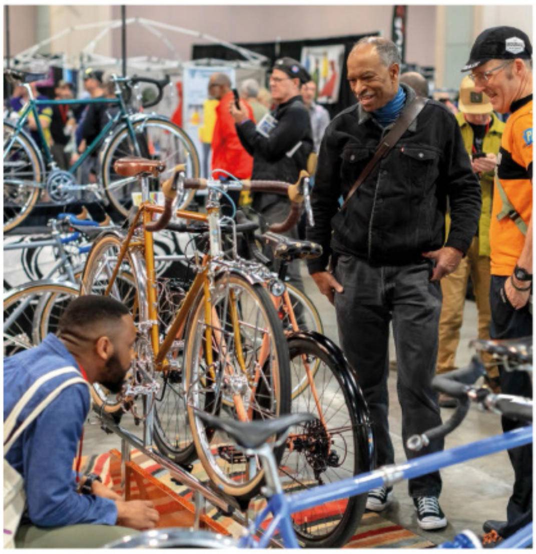

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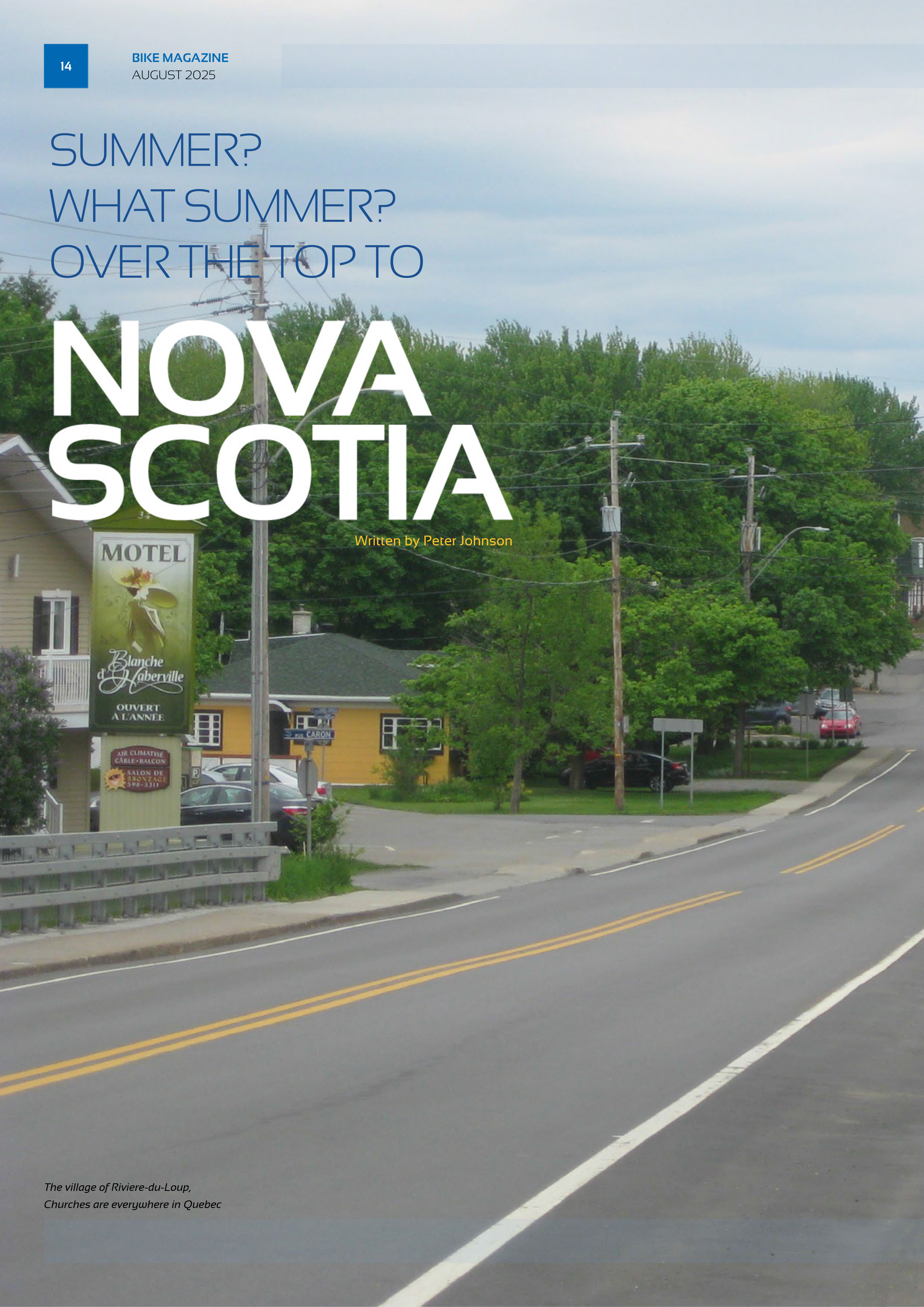
SUMMER? WHAT SUMMER? OVER THE TOP TO NOVA SCOTIA

Written by Peter Johnson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The village of Riviere-du-Loup,
Churches are everywhere in Quebec

"The great god Pan is alive and well but has a serious case of wanderlust." ....Roald Dahl.

Since our last cycling adventure my friend Brian and I phone each other regularly. On this call all is well with his wife and family back in freezing Winnipeg, while in Vancouver the January rains let loose their depressions. Simply we both have cabin-fever so we reminisce over one particular ride through Quebec's Eastern Townships. Suddenly, in the middle of a sentence, images loom. I broach the subject first.

"Metcalfe, why don't we cycle from Quebec City to Halifax, Nova Scotia, in June?" A pause. I half-expected an expletive or some other lame-duck excuse...I get another longer pause.

> "Johnson, who ties your shoe-laces?" I took his sarcasm as interest and ploughed on.

"Hey, there's parts of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia that we haven't yet cycled and bike-paths in Nova Scotia are everywhere; several lead right into Halifax. June is the best time."

Everything changed when he said he'd ask his wife. Well, he did, right there over the phone. I didn't hear any of the expected 'we'll talk later' routine, or the 'what-about' wifely rant of promises he'd made to fix the fence or paint the living-room. Sally was never like that. Instead, I overheard only mumbled morsels of what seemed to be an amiable chat. The mumbling stopped...silence. Then I heard it.

"Johnson, you're on. Let's do it!" Even though we were both retired our enthusiasm for cycle-touring doesn't waver. Age alone would never be reason enough to hang up the panniers. We'd meet in Toronto on June 4th and fly on to Quebec City. For now we'd each consult the guidebooks and maps, make rough, daily itineraries and share them regularly online. It could easily have been a plan to cycle the Silk Road from Samarkand to Xi'an. I knew I could count on Brian as I could my brother and in forty years of friendship a simple, over-the-phone "yes" was enough to seal the plan and allow us to revel in the fact that our hearts were still young.

Having explored Quebec City on numerous previous rides, we head across the St. Lawrence River to Levis the day after landing. The goal was to ride to the little village of Beaumont some 50 km east on the Gaspe Peninsula. Beaumont is a village nestled in the rolling countryside

The National historic Site of the 'Chateau Frontenac at Quebec City

beside the St. Lawrence River. It is still close to its French seigniorial roots even though its more modern architecture resembles 19th century, western France. It was on the door of the St. Etienne Church in Beaumont in 1759 that British General Wolfe nailed the proclamation declaring the fall of Quebec. Next morning, less historic but just as significant, Brian pauses on the steps of a local butcher shop (Boucherie, C. Marquis), in Bellechase, some 30 km. on to layer up with everything he brought…a fleece, another top, rain gear, gloves and insulated, long bike pants. It's freezing cold and raining, but there's a wind and for the most part it's with us. Is the great God Pan messing with us again.? We've just made a 50 km ride to Saint-Jean-Port-Joli as the downpour hits with a vengeance. We run across the street from the restaurant to our motel. We didn't know it then but this latest weather system has stalled and would remain with us for the next two weeks.

The cycle is predictable…howling South-Westerlies each morning accompanied by rain after lunch. But we are warm and booming along on that 3rd day. By afternoon, we are shining in the wet. Through the rain, I notice the mountains of the North Shore of the St. Lawrence river and catch glimpses of the still-white slopes of the ski-resort of Mont-Saint-Anne in the Laurentians. Some day, I'll cycle there. The Isle-aux-Grues archipelago on the St. Lawrence is just visible because the river also widens appreciably here. However, this expanse opens the way for the tempest to blow in more strongly. Beyond La Pocatiere and Riviere Ouelle, our route along byway, 132, swings ever closer to the water's edge where I recall there's long, tidal-flats by and not much else. I hunker down over the handlebars and think of the time when Thompson Owens and I were caught in a similar weather system some years before.

Suddenly over a rise I see the long stretches of small stones and marshes as we're blown swiftly along the edge of the famous flats. Looming ahead and set in a small grove of trees is a distinctive, three-storied, white trimmed, wooden mansion with a mansard roof and dormers so typical of fashionable French houses of the 18th century.

This 'new-world' chateau must have seen good times because there are six, small, wooden cabins arranged around an empty parking lot. They are 'overflow' cabins and used only in summer. On this day they're all empty. The owner, standing on her steps saw us coming and immediately offered us one of them. Perfect. After a quick, hot shower we head for the mansion's formal, wainscotted, oak-trimmed, dining-room where we gorge on thick, pea soup with meat and great chunks of home-made bread. We are the only guests in the place. I notice the sign announcing that supper is 'still on.' The owner nods but adds we must eat promptly at six. At 6:00 pm precisely and in our grandest, dry clothes we tuck into huge helpings of shepherd's pie and meatballs. Outside, the wind and rain roars on.

That evening back in the cabin we develop a plan to ward off the rotten weather....we invent a talisman. The thing is we don't wear it; we eat it! During the 1700s, in the market-town of

On the road to Kamouraska.
Heading for New Brunswick.

French is taken seriosly in
Quebec and New Brunswick.

Kamouraska
Saint-Philippe-de-Néri

spectons
nos
istances
Québec

Pontefract, in Yorkshire, U.K., sugar was added to a liquorice root mash, and pressed into the circular shapes of large coins. Hard and salty, the 'Pontefract Cakes' soon gained widespread acclaim as a medicinal lozenge touted to ward off ulcers and colic. Today, several companies still make millions of them. Bassets and Co., exports them worldwide. In Holland they're called "Klenes Munt Drop." I found them in a shop in Vancouver and bought a bag.

To initiate the charm we would put a single, hard 'Pontefract Cake' on our tongues at the outset of what looked like a miserable morning. Then we'd happily suck away and pedal on… our mind diverted from the wet by the sweet taste of liquorice. The one with the smallest speck of the lozenge still left on his tongue after 45 minutes, wins the prize; a dessert of his own choosing at the next stop. Brian smiles broadly for the next few days because he sucked on that hard, sweet bit of liquorice more slowly than I ever could. He wins every day and I'm out some money!

We hole up in a 'gîte' in Riviere-du-Loup called 'Gîte La-Go-Let-Note' where there's a laundry. Riviere-du-Loup marks the beginning of Bas-Saint-Laurent, the huge estuary of the St. Lawrence River.

The village began as a signory in the 17th century, but became a seal-hunting station nestled on the River Loup in 1802. ("Loup" is French for "seal"). By 1850 it was a centre for river navigation having the first lighthouse in Canada. Today that lighthouse is a bed and breakfast. In 1860, the Grand Trunk Railway ran through it to Halifax and it brought English workers and several Protestant chapels which stand proud near the neo-gothic Catholic Church of St. Patrice. Today Riviere-du-Loup is a summer resort, full of artisans and local crafts-people.

The owner of our 'gîte' also ran a second-hand bicycle shop on site. He didn't live on the premises and inadvertently locked our bikes in his garage before he left for the night. By 10:30 next morning, our bikes are still locked away and we're chomping at the bit as the clouds thicken. Finally near noon he appears full of apologies and offers to truck us up to the trailhead, of the Interprovincial cycling route, Route Verte. It's only 4 km from his bed and breakfast, but it's a vertical mile and it saves us a good hour of hard climbing. A sign at the top points to the trailhead,.

Of course overnight it rained and the newly dumped crushed-gravel trail bed is absolutely sodden. Riding is impossible as our wheels sink deeply into the small, grey stones. By 1:00 pm we've made only 20 km. We give up and search for an alternate, nearby asphalt byway,. However, the only road going our way is Highway No. 1, the Trans-Canada Highway through to New Brunswick. Luckily traffic is light. So with rear lights flashing we turn onto a wide shoulder heading east. We hear the occasional semi-trailers long before it's upon us and their drivers always give us a wide berth from the spray as they beep their horns. Truckers I don't mind but the early-June tourists streaking past in their SUV's that turn my air white.

The Trans-Canada Highway in northern New Brunswick has

The downpour begins in New Brunswick near St. Louis-du-Ha- Ha, N.B.

four lanes and concrete barriers which separate the directions so we make great time on the hard, slick asphalt. Every 10 km. or so there's a dry spot beneath an overpass where we stop to invoke the power of our tasty amulets. Under the first, the black speck on Brian's tongue is minuscule beyond belief and he pummels me with his widely-invented choices of his end-of-day desserts. Strangely the wind suddenly dies but the rain remains torrential. Under one stop in mid-afternoon we break out a bag of 'GORP' (good old raisins and peanuts) and snicker gleefully at our wet attire.

> Ahead there's a tall spire of a church which foretells of a village with local byways secreted amongst the hollows of the surrounding hills.

Even in the afternoon rain the blue-grey landscape surrounding Lake Temiscouata is absolutely beautiful. We've made 45 km and spot a motel ahead just off the highway. We see the name of the village on a road-sign and it makes me laugh. Our hidden little home for the night is on the outskirts of a settlement aptly named Saint-Louis-du-Ha!-Ha! Can this be real? Who is laughing at who? I will kill that mocking god, Pan!

Brian Metcalfe winning the Pontifract Cake Contest, in the rain.

Author, Peter Johnson, being the good loser.

The name, Saint-Louis-du-Ha!Ha! is real and the proprietor of our motel tells us that it refers to the location of Lake Temiscouata, the word "Ha Ha" is archaic French for an 'impasse on the trail' or 'a pause at the end of a road.' St. Louis and those other 18th century missionaries knew a thing or two. The manager adds that's it's the only village in the world that has two exclamation-points in its name. I search my memory. She's right; I can only recall the name of one village in Devon and it's named 'Westward Ho' after the name of Charles Kingsley's 1855 novel about the swashbuckling crew that sailed the seven seas with Sir Francis Drake.

We give Mother Nature the finger and pig-out on hot chicken, french-fries (chips (fries)) and green beans. Next morning the proprietor asks us how we are managing in the wet.

"No problem," I reply. "We've got talismans."She wanders away mumbling.

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PASHLEY UNVEILS THE ROADFINDER SL

A British-Built Steel Speed Machine

In a bold move that redefines British road cycling craftsmanship, Pashley has launched the Roadfinder SL, a high-performance steel road bike engineered for speed, precision, and all-day endurance. Officially unveiled on July 1st, 2025, the Roadfinder SL is a celebration of traditional frame-building artistry fused with cutting-edge design and materials.

Purpose-Built for the Tarmac

Unlike its all-road and gravel siblings—the Roadfinder and Roadfinder X—the Roadfinder SL is unapologetically focused on road performance. Designed for riders who crave speed and responsiveness, it's a machine built for chain-gangs, sportives, and solo epics alike.

At the heart of the SL is a custom Reynolds 853 'SL' tubeset, developed exclusively with Reynolds. Every element has been reimagined for weight savings without compromising strength or ride quality. The result? A raw frame weight of just 1,698g (size 54cm), delivering a lively, responsive ride with pinpoint handling and excellent vibration damping.

"We re-evaluated every component of the frame fabrication," says Jon Cumberpatch, Lead Designer at Pashley. "From 3D-printed dropouts to a new top tube with just 0.4mm wall thickness, every gram was scrutinised."

105
370
DT SWISS
ZIPP
vittoria
RUBINO
DT SWISS

Handmade in the UK, Designed for the World

Each Roadfinder SL is handcrafted in Pashley's UK factory, combining TIG welding with brazed and silver-soldered joints. The frame is paired with a Columbus Futura Disc SLX carbon fork, and features modern touches like internal cable routing, T47 bottom bracket, 12mm thru-axles, and UDH compatibility.

Despite its race-ready DNA, the SL doesn't forget real-world practicality. It includes discreet mudguard mounts and clearance for up to 32c tyres, making it a capable all-season road companion.

Striking Looks, Serious Performance

Available in two bold colour-ways—Hyper Violet with Gold and Thunderstorm Blue with Neon Yellow—the Roadfinder SL is as eye-catching as it is fast. Riders can choose from four premium builds or opt for a frame-set to build their dream machine:

- Shimano 105 Di2 – £3,950
- Shimano Ultegra Di2 – £4,995
- Shimano Dura Ace Di2 – £8,495
- Campagnolo Super Record 13-speed – £8,995
- Frameset only – £1,795

Each build features top-tier components from Zipp, Brooks, Vittoria, and Parcours, ensuring performance matches the frame's pedigree.

A Century in the Making

As Pashley approaches its 100th anniversary, the Roadfinder SL stands as a testament to the brand's enduring legacy and forward-thinking innovation.

"This new SL range is a shining example of how traditional British craftsmanship and ingenuity are at the forefront of bicycle design," says Andy Smallwood, CEO of Pashley. "I've already got one on order myself."

ZIPP
ROADFINDER
Pashley
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105

Cavendish Reflects on Tour de France Route Shake-Up:

"IT'S BEAUTIFUL, BUT I'M NERVOUS"

SIR BRADLEY WIGGINS
CAFE AFICIONADO
SIR MARK CAVENDISH
MAKING TOUR DE FRANCE HISTORY

As the 2025 Tour de France reaches its dramatic conclusion, cycling fans and riders alike are grappling with a major change to the race's iconic finale. For the first time since 1975, the traditional sprint showdown on the Champs Élysées has been replaced with a new route that includes three climbs up Montmartre's cobbled streets—echoing last year's Olympic road race.

In the latest episode of Café Aficionado, Sir Bradley Wiggins' cycling podcast, Sir Mark Cavendish—holder of a record 35 Tour stage wins—shares his thoughts on the new finish and its impact on the race's legacy.

"It's beautiful," Cavendish says, "but I'm nervous. The narrow roads might strangle the race. We saw how spectacular it was during the Olympics, but this is different—180 fatigued riders after three weeks of racing."

For Cavendish, the Champs Élysées holds deep personal significance. Four of his stage wins came on its grand boulevard, and he calls the final sprint "the reason you try and finish" the Tour. The change, he admits, is bittersweet.

"It's nice to try something different," he concedes. "But from a sentimental sense, it's quite iconic. As a sprinter, you do the suffering for that moment."

Wiggins, who famously led Cavendish out for victory on the Champs Élysées in 2012 while wearing the yellow jersey, reflects on the evolution of the Tour's finale:

"Up to 1975, the finish was in a velodrome. This could be the new thing in cycling. Fifty years from now, we might look back and say this climb changed the face of the Tour."

The episode also dives into the deep friendship between the two British cycling legends. From their early days at T-Mobile to their emotional 2012 Tour triumph, Cavendish and Wiggins share stories of loyalty, hardship, and mutual respect.

"Brad was there for me during the hard times," Cavendish says. "There are very few people you let your guard down to. Brad's one of those."

Wiggins adds:

"We've both been there for each other. Sometimes it's just a message at the right time saying, 'I love you, I hope you're alright.' That's what matters."

Café Aficionado **Episode 6**

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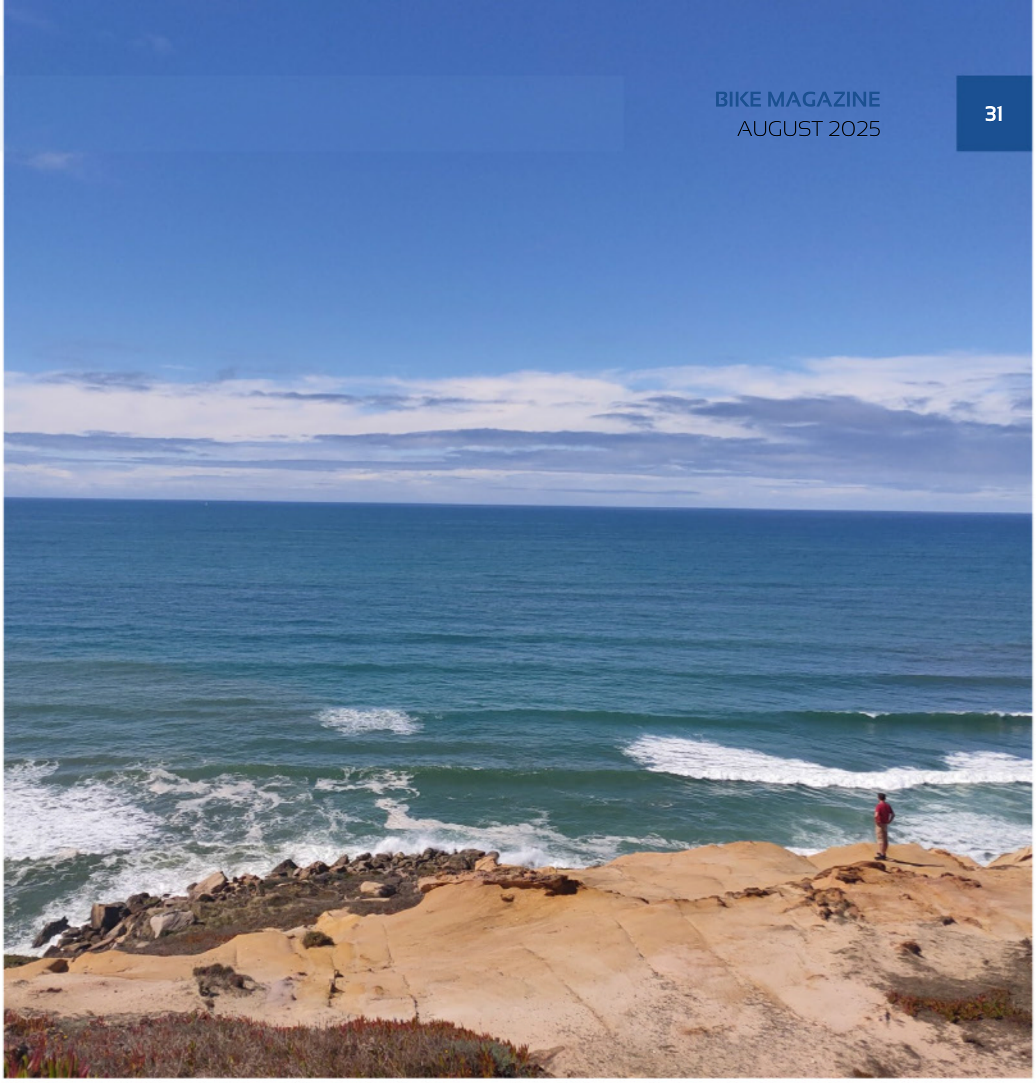
Departures: Apr–Oct 2026



4. Lake District of Chile & Argentina

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BIKE

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BOHEMA didn't start in a lab or a boardroom. It began on two wheels — during golden-hour rides through East London, when the traffic thinned, the sun dipped low, and the chaos of the day slipped away behind the hum of tyres on tarmac.

It was during these quiet, meditative miles that Zofija — a professional hair colourist and trans woman — began to dream up something different. A haircare ritual that did more than just perform. One that felt like recovery after a long ride: restorative, grounding, real.

BOHEMA was born out of motion. But it exists to bring you back to stillness.

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The first product to come out of this? The now-cult BOHEMA HAIR Oil — a Multifunctional Ultra-Lightweight Oil built for strength, glow, and resilience in a single step.

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- Repairs sun- and wind-exposed hair
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- Tames frizz and controls flyaways post-ride
- Protects from heat, breakage, and environmental stress
- Subtle, clean scent that won't clash with your ride essentials
- Ultra-light: feels like nothing, works like everything

It's suitable for all hair types, gender-inclusive, vegan, and made in the Baltics in small, careful batches. Each bottle is crafted with the same intention you bring to your rides: focus, presence, balance.

BOHEMA isn't here to fit into the beauty industry — it's here to ride past it.

At its heart is Zofija — whose life on the bike and in the salon shaped everything BOHEMA stands for. As a senior stylist in Central London, she spent years listening to real people talk about their hair — but even more about how they wanted to feel: like themselves, but softer. Stronger. More grounded.

BOHEMA became that space — a break in the noise. A reminder that beauty doesn't have to be loud, perfect, or performative. It just has to feel right.

And those twilight rides? Zofija still takes them. They remind her to breathe, to connect, and to remember why she started.

The BOHEMA HAIR Oil was only the beginning.

Shampoo and conditioner are coming soon — along with wearable pieces like silk scarves — all made with the same cyclist-minded minimalism and slow-crafted care.

This isn't fast beauty. It's a return to ritual. Like a post-ride stretch. Like the first sip of water after a hill climb. Intentional. Real.

And people are catching on.

With over a thousand new subscribers and growing buzz in the stylist — and now cyclist — communities, BOHEMA is becoming a quiet essential in the routines of those who want their products to work as hard (and as gently) as they do.

BOHEMA is for those who ride through life with purpose.

Who crave simplicity over noise.

Who believe care can be a form of resistance — and softness, a kind of strength.

Ask any rider who's tried the oil, and they'll likely tell you the same thing:

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It's a feeling.

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A ritual you can carry — from the bike to the body, and back again.

https://bohemahair.co

THE ALPS

We decided on a catered chalet in Morzine, in the Alps, which we would share with some friends

I was looking for an alternative destination for our holiday this year that would cater for the activities my boys participate in. One a keen downhill mountain biker, the other is passionate about road riding. So, we decided on a catered chalet in Morzine, in the Alps, which we would share with some friends, their son also being a downhiller and their daughter a somewhat reluctant roadie.

As the day of departure approached I was a bit apprehensive, after all I was travelling 589 miles with three children and an eighteen-year-old, two of my own and two down-hilling friends of my sons. I had last been to the Alps twenty years ago so I wasn't sure how I would cope with the driving.

Luckily the French roads were as good as ever and we arrived in Dijon, our just-over-halfway stop, late afternoon.

The next day we set off early only to arrive in Morzine to find it was raining and there was low cloud – very disappointing as it wasn't what we were expecting. We could get this kind of weather at home!

After a wait we were allowed into our chalet and spoke to our hosts. According to them there was a race the next day up the Col de Joux Verte; known as the Grimpee d'Avoriaz. This is an iconic route that was first climbed in the 1975 Tour de France and the record of 33 minutes is still held by Bernard Hinault, 860m for climbing over a distance of 14km. This was all the incentive Jack needed. My youngest son, 12 years old, has not a gram of fat on him and is nicknamed, by his fellow club riders, 'the whippet'. We headed to the start despite the miserable weather, only to discover we were a week late. He wasn't going to let me get away with it that easily. We headed to the start in front of the church where there was a line painted across the road.

We set our Garmins and we are off, Jack speeds off like a rocket and is lost from view. I keep thinking will he be alright, the first couple of kilometres pass easily but then, despite signs

to Avoriaz, I take a wrong turn. I realise I have made a mistake and turn round. I rediscover the 1km markers and start to count them down. The switchbacks keep coming, the cloud is so dense you can hardly see anything. I feel woefully under prepared – what am I doing? I know I have to keep going though because I have to catch up with Jack. Eventually the last kilometre sign appears - just one to go, it must be 10 degrees colder as it is almost 1800m, a final push and I have made it to the top and there is Jack shivering beside the finishing line. 59 minutes and 41 seconds not bad for a young one. Now we have the descent to contend with. We are cold and our hands are freezing which makes braking quite difficult – we were planning on taking a circular route but instead we take it steadily back the same way and finally we thaw out. Our sense of achievement is huge.

Our next riding adventure is a 30km route that is a warm-up for a longer ride.

This time we go with our friends Richard (the Dad) and Emily his daughter. This time we are going to have the luxury of a support car of Claire (the Mum) and their other son Will. Emily hasn't really done any long rides before so this is a baptism of fire. The cloud is still low so disappointingly there are no views to begin with. My legs are still hurting from the exertions of the day before so I am taking it steadily. The road out of Morzine towards Les Gets is a busy one, Jack is over taken by a French man and then hops onto his wheel and follows him into Les Gets at speed. Unfortunately Jack with his limited French can't understand him when they go their separate ways in Les Gets. We start heading uphill – that is the trouble with The Alps - you can go one of two ways - up or down. We reach a point where Richard says we are at the top – I am slightly sceptical but I am relying on his navigating skills as I can see a road ahead that appears to be going upwards – we are in one valley and I know we need to get to the next. A slight descent and then surprise, surprise it starts going up again – never trust a man and a map.

> Despite some breaks in the cloud the weather deteriorates again, Emily jumps in the car but I battle on knowing that it cannot be any worse than the day before.

We reach the 'real' top which is then followed by a glorious descent – the sun has come out, the cloud in the valley has started to lift and the road is smooth - delightful! It feels like we have ridden much further than twenty miles as that distance at home would feel like a short blast.

It's now Wednesday and we are half way through our holiday so we plan to do a longer route. The sun is out and it is warmer than it has been. This time we are doing 'An Excursion en Vallee d'Abondance Tour de Trechauffe'. The first 10 km are a steady descent so a nice easy start to the ride before the uphill. We head for the Col du Corbier. We pass through the village of Le Biot and the 1km marker posts are in evidence – it starts off at 6% but soon progresses to 7%. The switch backs are in view but we know it is only 7km to the top. With 3

km to go Emily is starting to flag, some words of encouragement and she keeps going, Jack and Richard are already ahead. The last 2 kms appear, but the incline increases to 8% then 9%: it is getting tougher but we know we are so close – a last push from Emily and finally we see the sign Col du Colbier. Her first Col and her first significant climb – girl power! Richard is waiting for us at the top but Jack has already disappeared – he gets cold if he hangs around, "the whippet".

Emily and Richard decide to take it easy for the remainder of the holiday but Jack has set his heart on climbing the Col De Colombiere. This Col has featured twenty times in The Tour de France, the first in 1960 and most recently in 2010 when Christophe Moreau was the leader at the summit.

> We start in Cluses, a town in the bottom of the valley. Heads down and we are off, once again Jack quickly disappears from view.

I think of all the famous cyclists who have ridden this route before me; the sun is out, The Alps are looking spectacular and it feels decidedly warmer than it had the first day we headed out. The gradient is gradual to begin with, the first kilometre sign we came across was sixteen and just 2%; this soon increased to 6% but my legs were feeling good and as yet nobody had passed us. Jack is ahead - a small dot in the distance. The mountains spread out before me, the road is smooth and I am enjoying the ride. I pass through the village of Le Reposoir where a small stream runs through and I contemplate paddling. Then the road changes dramatically and starts to climb steeply, gaining height via some impressive switch backs. I turn the corner and there in front of me is the top. It looks teasingly close and I suddenly increase my speed as I think it is not far to go.

My eyes are deceiving me though as I am still only at the 14km marker.

The gradient changes from 9% to 10% and the final kilometre is 11%. I am nearly there, a man comes past and shouts: 'well done, keep going just 500m' though it is probably the hardest of them all. At last I am there! The summit and Jack are waiting – it has taken him 1 hour 15 minutes. It took me a little longer. There is a massive smile on his face and a large grin on mine. There was a time when I had to wait for Jack – now that era is almost a distant memory. A few photos at the top and the chance to enjoy the view was needed before we head back down again.

I think sometimes we underestimate what our children can do. Jack and Emily both ride because they want to, not because we as parents make them. They have pure drive and enthusiasm for the sport of road cycling. Sometimes it is Jack that makes me push my boundaries. I probably wouldn't have ridden the Col De Colombiere – he wanted to do it because in the past

it had been ridden in The Tour de France. He wanted to follow in the footsteps of some of his heroes of the sport.

My boys have always been keen cyclists and have been mountain bikers from a very early age.

My husband and I regularly took them to Wales and The Lake District despite living in the furthest south eastern corner of the UK.

Sadly my husband was diagnosed with leukaemia and despite intensive treatment he passed away. The boys decided that they wanted to join a cycling club and it was the support of our local clubs that helped us get through this difficult time. Thanet Road Club is a Go Ride Club that encourages children to participate. Through their development programme the boys are steadily becoming very competent riders. It has also pushed me to become both a stronger cyclist and a coach. But more about the Go Ride programme in a future edition, for now we're basking in Alpine glory.

RESTRAP UNVEILS MODULAR INNOVATION

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British bikepacking brand Restrap has once again raised the bar for modular cycling gear with the launch of its latest innovations: the Switch Panniers and Switch Multi Mount, both built around the brand-new Hiplok x Restrap Switch System. Officially released on June 26, 2025, these products promise to revolutionise how riders pack, commute, and explore.

Click. Go. Ride.

At the heart of this release is the Switch System—a quick, secure, and modular mounting solution that attaches to any standard 64mm bottle boss spacing. Developed in collaboration with security specialists Hiplok, the system allows riders to effortlessly switch between panniers, bottle cages, cargo cages, and even folding locks, all with a simple click-and-go mechanism.

Switch Panniers: Compact, Waterproof, Adventure-Ready

The new 5-litre Switch Panniers (£64.99 / €77.99 / $119.99) are designed for versatility—ideal for both rugged off-road adventures and daily commutes. Handmade in Yorkshire, these panniers are fully waterproof, feature a roll-top closure, and include reflective webbing for added visibility.

Weighing just 300g (including fittings), the panniers attach securely to forks or racks using the Switch System. A flexible backplate minimises vibration and rattling, making them trail-tested and race-proven—already having endured the Trans Balkan Race and Tour Divide.

“They’re perfect for smaller bikes or riders who prefer panniers over traditional bikepacking bags,” says Restrap’s team. “And with the Switch System, they’re on and off in seconds.”

Switch Multi Mount: One Mount, Endless Options

Retailing at just £14.99 / €17.99 / $22.99, the Switch Multi Mount is the unsung hero of the system. Weighing only 60g, it allows riders to swap between accessories—bottle cages, locks, or panniers—without tools or hassle. It’s a minimalist’s dream for modular touring setups or urban rides.

Built for the Modern Cyclist

Both products are designed with safety and compatibility in mind. The Switch System is rated for a maximum load of 1.5kg per boss, and Restrap recommends checking fork specifications before mounting. The system is especially suited for gravel forks and modern touring setups.

A Glimpse into the Future

Restrap hints that more Switch-compatible products are already in development, signaling a broader shift toward modular, adaptable cycling gear.

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SUMMER IN THE SOUTHERN ALPS

Text and Pictures by **Richard Howard**

Review :
Club Med - Serre Chevalier

In late June of this year I along with a few other journalists were invited to experience the recently renovated Club Med location in Serre Chevalier in the French alps which at it's lowest point 1,200 metres above sea level and highest at Telesiege Yret 280 metres. It's located just under 3hrs from the Lyon airport and around 2hrs from Turin in Italy by road.

They've spent a whopping 50 million euros on the renovation and to pivot from focussing just on being a winter resort that primarily offers skiing and snowboarding to being open all year round and focussing on such areas as biking, hiking, rock climbing and rafting.

They operate an all inclusive package which doesn't just mean 3 meals a day and any drink you want from the bar but it also includes the activities too. You can choose whether your package includes flights and transfers along with equipment or not.

Whilst I was there on their invitation for 4 action packed days which I thoroughly enjoyed.

When settling into Club Med it was good to see that they cater for all levels of biking experience and so if someone in your group is rather new to riding they can join the beginners class and do a relatively flat surface ride to build up their confidence then take it from there whilst others can hit the more challenging routes and for those who really want to push themselves then going up the Izoard or Galibier, the legendary peaks of the Tour de France is a must do.

In the group that Club Med had put together we had Olympic gold medalist and 7 time world champion Elenor Barker and her professional cyclist husband join us and so the bar was very much set! She joined us for the bike ride up Col de l'Echelle.

Whilst you can of course bring your own bicycle to the resort Club Med have everything you need on site and included in the package from bicycles including road, off road and electric worth around 5000 euros each to helmets to bike shoes meaning you can pack light if you prefer.

As you can imagine the alps has a huge choice of mountains to climb and you can either go out on your own and explore or join one of the advanced groups hosted by Club Med.

I was relieved to find that throughout my trip and bicycle rides I consistently had signal on my Vodafone mobile and so were the worst to happen or if a wrong turn were taken and it was getting dark it was reassuring to know that I could reliably reach out for help.

The guided rides hosted by resort are led by a fully trained instructor at the front of the pack as well as one to the rear ensuring that no one is left behind or gets lost.

They also send out a large van that keeps an eye on the groups and is in touch with the instructors so if anyone is feeling tied, has a bicycle issue or incurs an injury they along with their bicycle can get back to the hotel in the back of the van.

If you prefer the social aspect of cycling and/or having a guide then its easy to book onto a trip with a Club Med guide and other holiday makers at your level of fitness and experience. They have a kiosk right by the bar for you to book onto the next days excursion and can answer any questions about which routes are most difficult, which are most challenging or picturesque or most suitable for the current weather conditions and planned road closures.

As the photos show the scenery is breathtaking whether you go in the Summer or Winter and with the local authorities closing off roads on a rotation basis you really can road bike with safety to your hearts content.

> Having no cars also means you can safely stop as much as you want to take some truly incredible photos of natural beauty. Something I must say I felt compelled to do often.

My visit coincided with it being 30+ degrees in both London and Lyon but as the resort was in the alps you won't need to worry about it being too hot not to be able to cycle. Even during this heatwave it was in the early 20's and so very manageable.

Which was a relief as their CEO of Europe told me that Club Med made the decision not to install air conditioning at their resort to help hit their goals of being green and so that they would not need to pass on these additional electrical costs to their guests.

That being said, it's also in an amazing location where it gets an average of 300 days of sunshine per year which of course translates into incredible views and photos for you to share with loved ones.

What was also refreshing to see was that Club Med offered plenty of other Summer activities to do for those who want a break from cycling. On one of the mornings we did a guided hike (they have multiple levels of difficulty) from a guide who was experienced in not just the local area but

also plant life which made the hike all the more interesting and enjoyable.

For an additional fee there was also rafting and kayaking nearby which would have been fantastic to do but alas there was not the time.

Adrenaline junkies will also be happy to hear that local suppliers offer paragliding too.

We were however treated to a visit to the local spa called Les Grands Bains du Monêtier which had both in and outdoor facilities with breathtaking views of the alps as well as a lazy river and jacuzzi area to relax those sore muscles. With the outdoor pool just as warm as the internal one you really can relax and unwind whilst soaking up incredible mountain views.

For those travelling with kids you'll be pleasantly surprised that the child care aspect is rather comprehensive. Some holiday parks basically stick kids in a room in front of the TV but Club Med provides a range of different groups & engaging activities depending on the age of the child.

> The older ones are taken out on hikes by experienced guides, told about the scenery and flowers and we even passed one group whilst on our hike making "magic potions" from woodland ingredients.

In regards to the night entertainment there is always something going on in their main lounge and bar area from a show to live music to just disco style entertainment. Its very energetic I must say and I'd can best describe it as happy clappy. During one of the nights different nights I was there the hotel manager gets up on stage for a little dance and then on another the head chef gave it a go as well!

Food in the restaurant was very diverse with a wide range of different dishes for all dietary and allergy needs. It's buffet style with a different theme each night which keeps it fresh.

They also offer a fine dining restaurant where you are well taken care of and have access to food not served at the buffet. We were treated to it one night and had a very succulent steak and very refreshing cocktails along with some fine wine which was locally produced.

The rooms were spacious and very bright coloured I must say, the bed was comfy and having the shower and toilet room separate I'm sure is appreciated by those sharing.

History buffs will be excited to know that there was also an old French town called Briançon with Vauban's UNESCO-listed fortifications nearby that dates back to 17th century and is still in remarkably good shape.

Its easily reachable via bike from the resort or they can arrange a transfer for you. Plus you can explore it yourself or with an experienced guide and give you some incredible photographic moments especially in the old church and the nearby fortifications.

> We were also invited into the old court room which had signatures from the reign of Louis XIV (14th) which is extremely rare due to the fact that most were defaced during the French Revolution.

For those interested in visiting Severe Chauffeur and considering Club Med then these are some of my top tips.

1. Seriously consider a package that includes the all inclusive hotel experience AND your flights and transfers as should your flight get delayed or cancelled its up to Club Med to get you to them or home. They should also be able to amend the dates you stay / amount you're charged. However if you save a few pounds getting your own flights and things go south its on you to get new last minute flights and you'll likely lose out on accommodation fees that you've paid them for.
2. Club Med operates on a Saturday to Saturday basis where for the most part guests leave and new ones arrive on this day therefore there are NO group activities on this day. Not a problem if you're out doing your own thing but not ideal if you want to take advantage of the tours and excursions so ensure you factor that into your plans.
3. Whilst they are by no means struggling they are still primarily a winter resort and so I would imagine

Sentier Botanique du BEZ

can be far more flexible with pricing so long as its not during a peak time i.e. Summer holidays for kids in France. Even more so if you're going with a large group. I would also suggest haggling directly with a Club Med representative and doing the same through one of their travel agents to get the best deal.

That might not be money off but including x or y in your package as its important that you read up on what's included and what's not including time limits. For example the standard package includes just a few hours on their electric bikes a week then its chargeable. If you're an enthusiast and will use more than that then that's certainly one point to negotiate on.

> To give you a ball park figure two adults sharing a room and staying for a week starts at £3400 and two adults and two kids at £4500.

And finally for any of those planning their first road biking holiday I would highly recommend checking the terms of your travel insurance policy to see if it covers you for guided and unguided road biking trips. If you don't and you have an accident it may be a very expensive holiday indeed. Finding a suitable policy is easy enough though with just a basic search.

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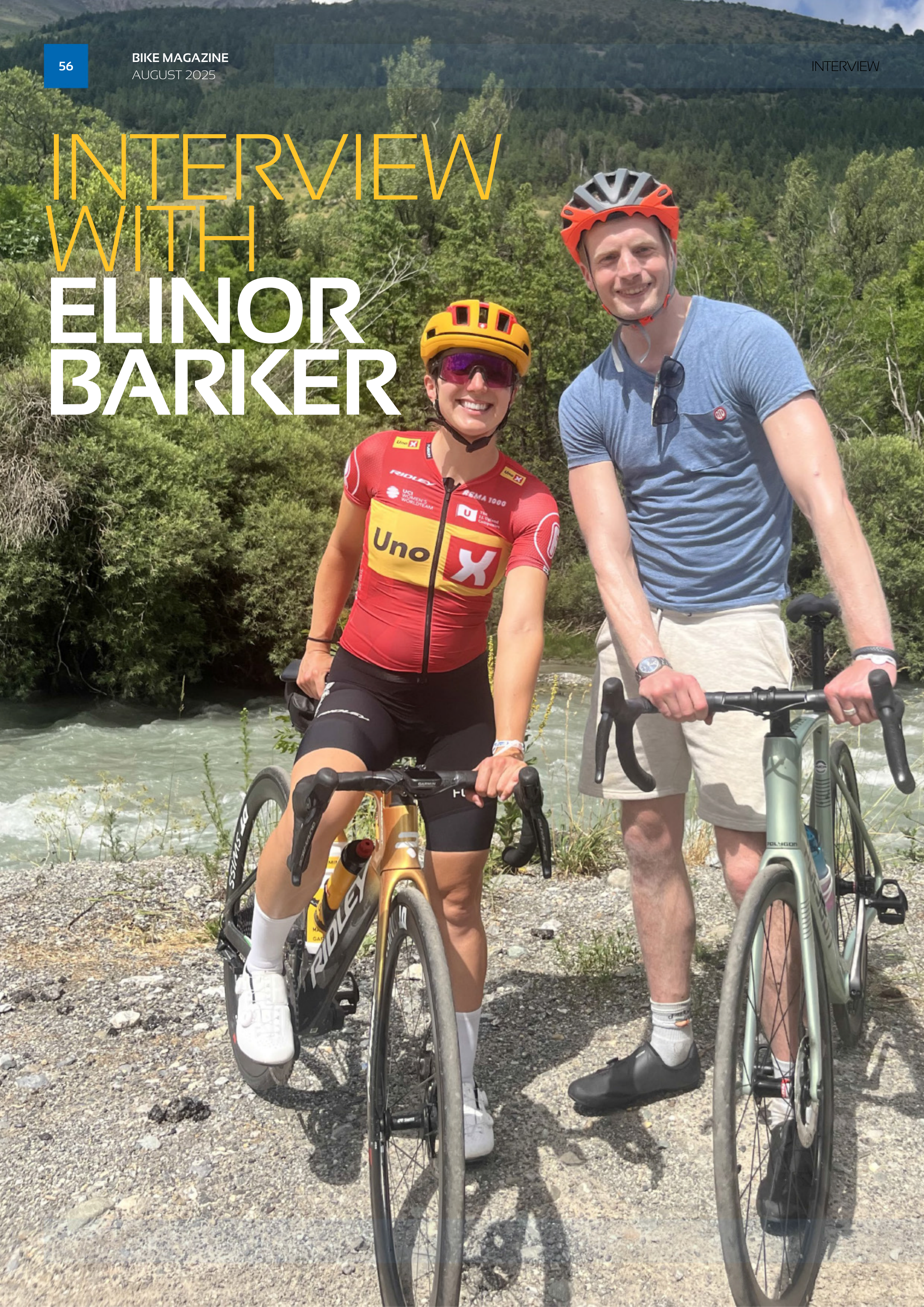
INTERVIEW WITH ELINOR BARKER



Text and Pictures by **Richard Howard**

When it gets tough riding, what do you do to keep your mind off the aching and push through it?

I wish I had a better answer but I really just focus on the numbers when I'm training, and try to break it up by giving myself goals within the ride or effort. In racing it's harder!

But again I try to think about what I need to do in the short term, the next few minutes or kms, rather than the race as a whole.

How Important is Nutrition and Rest to Performance?

Nutrition and rest are huge, you really can't perform well for long if you aren't hitting them both pretty well. I used to think good nutrition meant not eating too much, but modern cycling has almost become an eating competition!

For those looking to boost their performance are there any particular accessories you recommend?

A heart rate belt is a good start, and a power meter is a good next step to track performance and improvement.

After spending a few days together in our group one thing everyone agrees on is how down to earth and approachable you are. How have you been able to do that besides your very impressive track record?

Aw that's very kind! It's not something I think about much. It doesn't feel like it when you're in it and caught up in racing, but cycling is a small world and it doesn't take much to step outside of it and realise there's a lot more that's important in life.

What, if anything, could central or local government do to increase the uptake of cycling?

I think looking at how countries like Denmark and Holland have focused on cyclists and pedestrians as a priority when planning any new infrastructure would be a good start. Cycling doesn't need to mean racing, it can just mean opening up another mode of transport for lots of people. I think that's why the Danes and Dutch are so good- if you're riding a bike for transport every day you'll probably pick up a few skills here and there!

And finally what would be your 3 best tips to those who dream of going pro?

Top tips for going pro-

1. have some short term goals in mind and learn as much as you can if they don't go to plan.
2. you'll be surprised how much you can gain from certain equipment. Tyres and inner tubes are a relatively cheap and quick way to make a big gain, for example.
3. train your gut to handle a lot of carbs on the bike! Most amateurs don't eat enough, and you can't go straight from 40g/hr to 100+ without a few issues. Build up gradually and find what food and energy drinks work for you.

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POWER breathe

As any serious cyclist knows, your legs may do the peddling, but it's your lungs that often set your limits. You can have the lightest bike, the perfect gearing, and a nutrition plan dialled in to the gram, but if you're gasping on climbs or winded in the sprint, your performance hits a ceiling. That's where the POWERbreathe comes in.

Initially, I was skeptical. A small plastic device that promises to strengthen my breathing muscles? It sounded like something from a late-night infomercial. But after hearing from a few teammates who swore by it, I decided to give it a proper test.

Out of the box, the POWERbreathe feels well-made, lightweight but solid, with adjustable resistance and a simple design. No batteries, no apps (unless you opt for the high-end models), just you and your breath. It's portable enough to take in a jersey pocket, but really, it's best used at home as part of your daily routine.

Using it is straightforward but surprisingly tough. You set the resistance, then breathe in through the mouthpiece, forcing your diaphragm and intercostal muscles to work harder than normal. A full set of 30 breaths takes less than five minutes, but don't mistake that for easy. At higher resistance levels, it feels like trying to inhale through a straw while climbing Alpe d'Huez.

After the first week, I noticed I was less winded during hard intervals. By week three, the difference was undeniable: better control on long climbs, quicker recovery after bursts, and the ability to stay relaxed, and focused, during intense efforts.

POWERbreathe is essentially a gym for your lungs. By training the muscles responsible for inhalation, you increase respiratory strength and endurance. Multiple studies back this up, especially in endurance athletes. For cyclists, this means more oxygen with less effort, a clear advantage in both training and racing.

The biggest benefit for me? I no longer dread long climbs or headwinds. I feel more composed under pressure, and my breathing has become more rhythmic, especially when deep in the red. It's also helped in unexpected ways, like recovery. I've found I can get my breathing under control faster after intense efforts, which translates into quicker heart rate recovery.

POWERbreathe isn't a magic bullet, but it's a powerful supplement to structured training. At around £39.99 to £59.99 depending on the model, it's cheaper than a new pair of tyres and arguably offers more return on investment, especially for those of us already squeezing every watt we can out of our gear.

For cyclists looking to get an edge without adding more time in the saddle, the POWERbreathe is a quiet game-changer. Five minutes a day might just make your next ride feel a whole lot easier, or faster.

Rating: 4.5/5

Small device, big difference.

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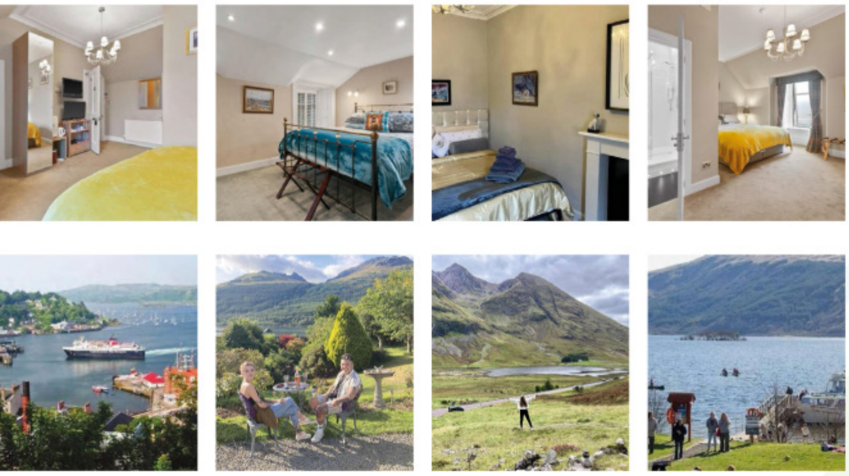

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EASTERN
POLAND

Eastern Poland provides an idyllic setting for a bike tour, whichever type of cyclist you are.

Poland was on our path from Helsinki to Singapore and so we had to cross it from North to South. Having, in our heads, an unfounded stereotype for Pole's bad driving, we decided to cross the border using a small dirt path near Berzniki (just off Highway 16 NE of Augustow) as to avoid the busy main road where, we imagined, catastrophe surely awaited. The decision to take a quieter route was not just about safety—it was about immersing ourselves in the landscape. Crossing into Poland via a dirt path near Berzniki felt like stepping into a forgotten world, where the hum of traffic was replaced by birdsong and the crunch of gravel under our tires. The countryside welcomed us with open arms, and we immediately sensed that this leg of our journey would be something special.

We were immediately plunged into bike touring heaven; small, quiet, well paved country roads (in Latvia and Lithuania it's always a coin toss) which lazily go through hamlets and small villages and casually drive you pass small shops and local restaurants which are not only cheap, but also incredibly tasty. Oh, before we continue any further, just a quick tip about this corner of the world; smoked meat. The roads meandered through fields of golden wheat and lush green pastures, dotted with red-roofed cottages and the occasional stork perched atop a chimney. Each village seemed to have its own rhythm, its own charm. We stopped frequently to chat with locals, who were always eager to share a smile and a story. And yes, the smoked meats—especially the kielbasa—were divine, their rich, savory aroma wafting from roadside stalls and family-run delis.

> We always refrain from wild camping the first couple of nights in a new country and our first one in Poland was spent in a campsite in the Biebrza National Park, the biggest of the country.

Similarly to The Lake District, it's well known for its fresh water reserves and wildlife and offers water based activities left and right. Biebrza National Park, with its vast wetlands and diverse birdlife, felt like a sanctuary. We pitched our tent under a canopy of stars, lulled to sleep by the gentle rustle of reeds and the distant call of owls. The park's commitment to conservation was evident in every trail marker and educational sign, reminding us of the delicate balance between tourism and nature.

We spent a delightful afternoon swimming in a crystal clear river, which went straight through the campsite, and tasting local beer in the bar. It was, after all, a Sunday! The river was cool and invigorating, a perfect antidote to the summer heat. We floated lazily on our backs, watching dragonflies dart above the water and clouds drift across the sky. Later, at the bar, we sampled a variety of local brews, each with its own unique character—some hoppy, others malty, all refreshing.

Next morning we followed a solitary trail to Augustow, a local tourist resort, where we withdrew money (lucky in the campsite we could pay by card) and had early morning ice cream which Poles seem to be dearly fond of. Very yummy.

Augustow had a laid-back charm, with tree-lined boulevards and a bustling market square.

The ice cream, rich and creamy, came in flavours we'd never encountered before—blackcurrant, poppy seed, even elderflower. It was a delightful surprise and a testament to the Polish love for sweet treats.

Our intention was to make our way to the centre of the country to Warsaw, but while licking our way through our ice cones we came across a sign about a cycle route and our minds were set; we wanted to see more of the East! The sign for the Green Velo route was like a beacon, promising adventure and discovery. We didn't hesitate. The idea of exploring the lesser-known eastern regions of Poland was too tempting to resist.

The Green Velo route is quite simply an amazing way to discover a huge, less known chunk of Poland. Although it mostly shares its path with cars on small roads, with the occasional odd kilometre on main ones (bridges don't grow on trees), we were happy to discover that Polish drivers are more than courteous with cyclists, hard shoulders are plentiful, wide, and in good conditions and that Poles, in general, are just the best! The Green Velo route turned out to be a cyclist's dream. The infrastructure was impressive—clearly marked paths, frequent rest stops, and informative signage. We felt safe and supported, a stark contrast to some of the more chaotic roads we'd encountered in other countries. Polish drivers, contrary to our initial fears, were respectful and patient, often giving us a wide berth and a friendly wave.

> It's technically not part of the Euro Velo network but it definitely is much better than what we had experienced in the Baltics where it's still pretty much a working process.

We also had the feeling that it was being highly promoted by local authorities as a clean and rewarding type of tourist and we were welcomed in the Tourist Information Centre of Bialystok with open arms by a friendly team who even went to such lengths as to invite us to coffee and biscuits and called the local campsite to make sure they were open and fully operational. They had plenty of bike specific brochures with all the bike friendly accommodation, etc. and a mind blowing tool box which would get almost anyone out of trouble! The hospitality we received in Bialystok was emblematic of our entire experience in Poland. The Tourist Information Centre felt more like a community hub, where travellers were treated like honoured guests. The staff's enthusiasm was infectious, and

their resources invaluable. We left with maps, brochures, and a renewed sense of excitement for the journey ahead.

With the occasional night spent in campsites, we spent most of our Polish nights either wild camping in clean picnic areas next to refreshing rivers or in someone’s garden, having been pre-invited, of course!

> Wild camping in Poland was a joy. The picnic areas were clean and well-maintained, often located near rivers or forests.

When we stayed in gardens, our hosts treated us like family, offering us tea, fresh produce, and stories of their lives. These encounters added depth and warmth to our travels, reminding us of the universal kindness of strangers.

The Green Velo accompanied us through some surprisingly interesting small cities such as Bialystok and Bielsk Podlaski, whooshing us along the Bielorusse border and regularly providing useful guidance by means of well maintained, purpose-built bike rest areas (with recycling facilities and sometimes even basic tools!) where signs and maps informed us of local sites every few kilometres. Bialystok and Bielsk Podlaski were full of surprises—vibrant street art, cozy cafes, and lively markets. The proximity to the Belarusian border added a unique cultural flavour, with signs in multiple languages and a blend of architectural styles. The rest areas along the route were a godsend, offering not just a place to rest, but also a chance to learn about local history and ecology.

One of the prettiest discoveries, for us, was the small wooden orthodox churches scattered around this part of Poland; their bright blue wooden walls (and grave headstones) with either golden or silver details always popped out of nowhere and made us slow down, or often stop, just to admire their simplicity and striking beauty. The wooden Orthodox churches were like jewels scattered across the landscape. Their vivid colours and intricate details stood in stark contrast to the surrounding greenery. We often found ourselves lingering, sketching or photographing these serene sanctuaries. They spoke of a deep spiritual heritage and a community rooted in tradition.

The only reason we ultimately, after about 10 days, decided to get off this trail and go back to using our Garmin for some real navigation, was Krakow.

> You can't be in Southern Poland and not visit Krakow! Krakow beckoned with its rich history and vibrant culture. We knew we couldn't miss it, even if it meant leaving the comfort of the Green Velo route.

The anticipation of exploring its cobbled streets and medieval squares kept us peddling with renewed vigour.

Not too bad though, again, Poland ranks very high in our "safe cycling" chart, so we slowly made our way diagonally towards the country's cultural capital discovering astounding places on our way such as Lublin and Sandomiers. The journey to Krakow was filled with unexpected delights. Lublin's old town was a maze of narrow alleys and colourful facades, while Sandomiers charmed us with its hilltop views and artisanal shops. Each stop added a new layer to our

BIKE

understanding of Poland's diverse regions.

Due to its hilly topography, cycling in the south of Poland is a pleasure. It's also very agricultural and, riding around here in June, we got our faces regularly stuffed with berries of all sorts! The southern hills were a welcome challenge, offering panoramic views and a sense of accomplishment with every climb. The agricultural landscape was lush and bountiful, and we often stopped to pick berries or chat with farmers tending their fields. It was a slower pace, but deeply rewarding.

We spent a few days in Krakow just walking around eating ice-cream whenever we could. Unfortunately Krakow is one of those cities where you can spend a week and still leave with the feeling of not having tried everything there was to try. In fact, not having had enough, on our way out we stopped at the Wieliczka Salt mine (the biggest in the World) which is definitely a must! Krakow exceeded all expectations.

> From the grandeur of Wawel Castle to the bustling energy of the Main Market Square, the city was a feast for the senses. We indulged in pierogi, explored hidden courtyards, and marvelled at the craftsmanship of local artisans.

The Wieliczka Salt Mine was a fitting finale—a subterranean wonder that left us in awe.

Finally our Polish adventure was about to end with its final leg being mostly uphill towards the Bieszczady Mountains and the Slovak border. After a stopover in Novy Sacz, we avoided the busy Route 75 and discovered a solitary EV11, took some pictures of our bikes on a sleepy, grassy ski resort and had one last ice-cream before crossing the border on a cold, rainy Saturday. The final stretch through the Bieszczady Mountains was both challenging and exhilarating. The misty peaks and dense forests felt wild and untamed, a stark contrast to the urban elegance of Krakow. We relished the solitude, the sense of being on the edge of something vast and mysterious. Crossing into Slovakia felt like the end of a chapter, but also the beginning of a new adventure.

Whatever you're looking for, Poland is a huge country and an almost infinite universe to discover. Unfortunately we only had time to cycle a small portion of it but we will, in time, make sure that we cover those regions still unexplored by our wheels. It will amaze you by its friendly people, diverse landscapes, architectural styles and rich cuisine. Poland had surprised us at every turn. Its people, landscapes, and culture had left an indelible mark on our journey. We knew we'd only scratched the surface, and we vowed to return, to explore the mountains, the coast, and everything in between. It was a country that welcomed cyclists with open arms and open hearts.

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